

# BARRIERS & OBSTACLES

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This report on the state of education in South Carolina contains profound and workable concepts that can create sustainable positive change in South Carolina's educational system. Given both the complexity and the urgency of the situation, however, these changes are akin to turning a supertanker around only 100 yards from shore. It might be easier to move the shore.

The kind of cultural change this report recommends takes decades to accomplish, but its fundamental approaches can help to remove some of the inevitable barriers to change, such as:

1. Failure to enforce the STWTA. *The School-to-Work Transition Act (STWTA)* is simply not being enforced, with no consequences for school systems that fail to implement it. Enforcement statewide, however, will undoubtedly be a challenge due to lack of resources.
2. Lack of alignment among educational institutions. As with all large organizations, silos of responsibility and funding often create independent or undercoordinated efforts, overlaps, and redundancies. It is simply impossible to accomplish structural reform in any reasonable time frame. We can, however, create unified, overarching goals for educational institutions and require them to begin reevaluating and aligning their own internal goals, departments, and procedures.
3. Lack of connection between business and education. Systemic, consistent efforts in linking education and business are needed throughout the state. Tech Prep consortia have obtained outstanding results in some areas of the state but have had limited success in others. Adopt-a-school programs have had some success but are not usually sustainable or oriented toward a strategic goal. Currently, initiatives involve only a very small percentage of South Carolina businesses and industries. To create a more effective link, educators must reach out to understand the changing needs of business, and, in turn, businesses must reach out to understand the constraints facing educators.
4. Resistance to change among educators. Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to implementing reform will be the natural resistance to change, particularly among traditional academic educators and those who feel the problems are beyond their control. Still, there is one constant among high quality educators—a passion to help every child learn. When educators see that these reforms aim to leave no student behind, to prepare all students to achieve, and to place an even higher value on education, they will lead this reform from the classroom to the statehouse.

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5. **Systemic and public resistance to change.** Since 1994, South Carolina’s educational system has offered two pathways for students—Tech Prep and College Prep; therefore, the Task Force proposal to eliminate them and add a new pathway will surely be met with questions and concerns not only from educators but also from parents and other stakeholders. The same is true for the recommendations being made to broaden academic preparation into career clusters and to expand the content of assessments—both will face an inertial challenge as well as the challenge to create system-wide change.
  6. **Parents, public opinion, and social stigma.** For several decades, the U.S. public has believed that a four-year college degree (or more) is the only sure way to ensure success. While this may once have been true, it simply isn’t the case today. Conversely, a high school education alone does not provide the higher-order skills and knowledge today’s businesses need. South Carolina’s parents, students, educators, and businesspeople must become more aware of the multiple pathways to career success.
  7. **Government officials’ unwillingness to lead.** Education has become a political hot potato, absorbing nearly half of the state’s general funds and governed by literally thousands of pages of laws and regulations. Taking a leadership position on education reform can quickly cost votes when it goes against conventional wisdom. The trick will be to craft practical solutions to public concerns.
  8. **Labeling and limiting students.** We must be especially careful not to label students, channeling them into less rigorous curricula, lowering their expectations and limiting their opportunities. This approach has historically been used with most at-risk students, creating a “dumping ground” for those who lack motivation. Student-centered approaches can provide a safety net for our 30 percent who drop out and open doors to continued education, productivity, and satisfying lives.

# IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

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The Task Force recommendations are a synthesis of the collective wisdom of researchers, educators, business leaders, politicians, and Task Force members. Many elements of this report are found in the works of other task forces, committees, councils, consultants, white papers, and reports whose ideas have yet to become reality. One challenge of working to make our recommendations a reality, however, is the fact that there is no single entity whose success depends upon seeing these reforms carried out.

Beyond the barriers and obstacles spelled out earlier in the report, timing and prioritization are important considerations for this implementation plan. Accountability initiatives are basic prerequisites for workforce education reform and must be maintained as our current priority. The Education Oversight Committee's soon-to-be-released strategic plan is a comprehensive view of ongoing and planned initiatives, and these Task Force recommendations must be integrated into that overarching plan. In this context, the implementation strategy has been constructed to address short-term and long-term needs and opportunities.

## I Establish Accountability for Short-Term and Long-Term Implementation

- A. Form an interim Governor's Workforce Education Implementation Planning Committee as a bridge between the existing Governor's Workforce Education Task Force and the proposed Governor's Workforce Education Council.
- B. Reconstitute the School-to-Work Advisory Council, including new business representatives, as the Workforce Education Council with the mission of achieving systemic implementation of the *School-to-Work Transition Act (STWTA)* (amended according to Task Force recommendations) and all other Task Force recommendations. The Implementation Planning Committee should remain as a subcommittee of the council the council with recommendations on priorities, sequencing, policy issues, funding analysis, and specific plans for implementation of the nine Task Force recommendations.
- C. Hire an executive director and limited staff to support the council and the interim Planning Committee, assist in developing appropriate legislation, and establish an audit and compliance function to monitor the STWTA.
- D. Pass 2002 legislation to amend the STWTA to provide for accountability and enforcement as described in the items above.

## II. Communications

Many of the Task Force ideas are not in accord with traditional thinking, or they debunk existing stereotypes. To create a paradigm shift, frequent and ongoing communications efforts are an essential change management strategy. Initial communications activities should be directed by the interim Planning Committee until a subcommittee of the council is formed to focus on communications issues and awareness.

- A. Awareness campaign must include parents, general public, educators, and policy makers.
- B. Supporting material must be communicated in a thoughtful, consistent, and professional manner as new programs are introduced.
- C. A variety of communication activities must be undertaken to update coalitions and stakeholders.

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### III. Coalition Building

A coalition must be established and maintained to include other statewide plans and initiatives but not limited to:

- A. Governor's Workforce Education Council's departmental constituents;
- B. Education Oversight Committee;
- C. Grassroots community groups;
- D. Other educational groups and stakeholders (such as Teacher Institutes).

### IV. SDE-Specific Actions

Many of the Task Force recommendations can be implemented by the State Department of Education independent of other groups' actions that require a more systemic approach. Some suggested actions include:

- A. Creation of regional service centers;
- B. Transition to a career cluster model in advance of more enabling legislation;
- C. Completion of an internal restructuring to emphasize the new workforce education model;
- D. Reprioritization and an increased focus on character education.

### V. Educational Leadership by Other Agencies

Several of the Task Force recommendations can be implemented through leadership efforts by other institutions during the 2002/2003 time frame.

- A. Legislation can be drafted to strengthen the role and mission of Labor, Licensing, and Regulations and the Federal Bureau of Apprenticeship Training to include (1) assisting industry in developing state approved licenses, apprenticeships, and certificates; (2) developing criteria for state approval of licenses and certifications; and (3) maintenance of a registry of state-approved licenses and certifications.
- B. Statewide articulation agreements for Tech Prep courses with all universities can be adopted by the Commission on Higher Education and the State Board for Comprehensive Technical Education as well as statewide articulation agreements among two- and four-year colleges.

### VI. 2005-10 Plan

The five components above represent an implementation strategy that makes sense for South Carolina in late 2001 and that will likely be valid for two to three years thereafter. After that time, many of these elements should be reexamined and sunset as "mission accomplished," renewed, or modified based upon the current situation.

# PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY SUMMARY

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## SOUTH CAROLINIANS SUPPORT EXPANDED CAREER EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

***90% of respondents agree increased career education will help keep kids in school***

South Carolina residents support providing the state's public school students with more instruction about career options, according to a recent survey.

The survey suggests that South Carolinians see teaching public school students about career options as a way of lowering the dropout level. Ninety percent (90%) of respondents agree with the statement, "increased career preparation and awareness in public schools will help keep kids in school." In addition, ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents say it is important to increase "efforts to keep at-risk kids from dropping out of high school before graduation."

The survey also suggests overwhelming support for character education. Ninety-eight percent (98%) say it is important to "require values like honesty, responsibility, teamwork, and listening skills to be part of what is taught in public schools."

The survey also suggests support for career education in the early grades. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents say "teaching elementary and middle school students about career options" is important. Eighty-seven percent (87%) say "giving every high school student the opportunity for an internship or other practical work experience before they graduate" is important.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents agree that "South Carolina businesses are unable to find the kind of skilled employees they need," and almost the same number (60%) disagree with the statement that, "the average high school student understands what it takes to compete for a job when he or she graduates."

Pollster Dave Beattie said the survey results suggest that while South Carolinians are fairly positive toward public schools, they also think the state's public schools should do a better job of preparing students to enter the workforce.

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“The South Carolinians we talked to supported expanding what the state’s schools are doing to make sure high school graduates are ready to enter the workforce,” said Beattie. “Among the school improvements they say are important is starting earlier to get kids thinking about what they want to do after high school, and what skills they will need to achieve that.”

Results are from a random sample survey of 600 interviews of adults age 18 or older in South Carolina, conducted on behalf of Laine Communications and the Governor’s Workforce Education Task Force. Hamilton Beattie & Staff conducted telephone interviewing September 13 – 17, 2001. The margin of error due to sampling is  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

# THE PROCESS

May 31, 2000–October 1, 2001

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## EXECUTIVE ORDER # 2000-17

On May 31, 2000, Governor James H. Hodges signed Executive Order #2000-17 establishing the Governor's Workforce Education Task Force. This Executive Order cited the disparity between the state's workforce needs and the supply of qualified high school graduates. Further, the 1998 *Skills That Work* survey noted that the greatest challenge facing companies is the "availability of a prepared workforce." The Order also noted the need for remediation among many high school graduates in order to help them be successful in postsecondary educational programs. Governor Hodges' Executive Order expressed a need to reevaluate State policy to ensure support for better preparation of high school graduates to meet the needs of the workplace. Given these issues and concerns, the Workforce Education Task Force was charged with the following: Conduct an assessment of current workforce initiatives, state and national best practices, workforce demands, school-building activities contributing to meeting the workforce needs, and educational barriers deterring a smooth transition into the workforce. The Task Force was challenged to make recommendations that would better prepare students for both the workforce and postsecondary education.

Governor Hodges, in keeping with the Executive Order, was provided with an interim report on November 1, 2000. An official Task Force report with recommendations was delivered to the Governor in October 2001.

## *Task Force Activity*

1. Following the Governor's charge to the Task Force on July 21, 2000, the Governor's Workforce Education Taskforce met regularly throughout the remaining fourteen-month period in order to investigate the many issues related to workforce development in South Carolina.
2. In addition to the expertise and experience represented on the Task Force, a review of literature was conducted and much information from a state and national perspective was shared. The following are examples of works that were reviewed in whole or in part:
  - *Work Force 2020: Work and Workers in the 21st Century*, published by the Hudson Institute, was noted on many occasions and was a focal point of much of the Task Force's efforts. "The single most important goal of workforce development must be to improve the quality of American public education substantially." (p. 8)
  - *Skill Wars: Winning the Battle for Productivity and Profit*, by Edward E. Gordon, was another text that provided insightful information for the Task Force. "If business continues to ignore the workforce education gap, the jobs may be there, but where will the qualified workers come from? Some business leaders with a big stake in the outcome are speaking strongly for systemic change." (p. 25)
  - *Building Wealth: The New Rules for Individuals, Companies, and Nations* in a

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Knowledge-Based Economy, by Lester C. Thurow, is yet another example of the material referenced by the Task Force. “The old foundations of success are gone. For all of human history, the source of success has been the control of natural resources—land, gold, oil. Suddenly the answer is ‘knowledge.’ The world’s wealthiest man, Bill Gates, owns nothing tangible—no land, no gold, no oil, no factories, no industrial processes, no armies. For the first time in human history the world’s wealthiest man owns only knowledge.” (Prologue: p. 13)

3. Nationally and internationally known professionals presented information to the Task Force. Dr. Carol D’Amico, the U.S. undersecretary of adult and vocational education, recently appointed by President Bush, and co-author of *Workforce 2020*, has had experience in working with the Hudson Institute and presented information to the Task Force including details relative to the “skills gap” that exists in the nation today. Dr. Willard (Bill) Daggett, International Center for Leadership and Education, Inc., joined the efforts of the Task Force as he presented and collected data during a series of five regional meetings across South Carolina. Dr. Daggett collected information on a number of topics under review by the Task Force, including the pending recommendation for an additional diploma pathway. Dr. Ron McCage presented the V-TECS Career Cluster Framework during two sessions of Task Force meetings. The emphasis on career clusters at the national level had generated interest in this framework/best practice among members of the Task Force. Dr. Neils Brooks from the State Department of Education in Virginia relayed his expertise with the Linkages System and career clusters and encouraged establishing linkages with other organizations (V-TECS) in order to deliver information about course competencies and workforce readiness skills to learners. These individuals were joined by others to provide the Task Force with a broad perspective of best practices, initiatives, and possibilities for consideration by the Task Force.
4. Local experts presented examples of South Carolina best practice models: **Laurens County’s B-Best Model: Building Better Employment Skills for Tomorrow**; **State Department of Education’s Alternative Diploma Committee presentation**; and **Richland Two’s Career Prep model**.
5. Six subcommittees/teams were established in order to consider key issues in more detail. The District Diploma, Tech Prep and Integrated Pathways, Leadership and Structure, Communications and Marketing, Educational Delivery Systems, and Workforce Demand teams were organized and charged to deliver reports to the full Task Force. These reports were delivered in May 2000, and consensus was reached on each of the reports.
6. Dr. Bill Daggett and Laine Communications were charged with the synthesis of the massive amounts of materials and reports that were developed by subcommittees, presented by guest presenters, collected via regional meetings, and contributed by members of the Task Force. A writing team comprised of Task Force members also worked with them to draft a document for review by the Task Force.
7. In September 2000, the Task Force was provided with a draft report for review and comment. Appropriate revisions were made based on membership review.
8. The Governor’s Workforce Education Task Force Report was delivered to the Governor in October 2001.



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